

# The CIA Wanted

## Los Angeles

Good old country boys from Dixie, two-fisted drinkers and oil roughnecks, all "men of good true grit," were recruited for their reliability, expertise and patriotism to man the CIA ship *Glomar Explorer* on its bleak and dagger mission.

Bimbo, Cowboy, Curley and Big John were some of the nicknames of the men selected from Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi — men familiar with drill rigs and ships, men who wore their patriotism on their sleeves.

They were men from towns like Houston and Floresville and Bridge City and Pasadena in Texas; Brookhaven, Miss.; Slidell, La.; Millry, Ala., and Little Rock, Ark. They were brought to Redwood City for special reasons.

"We were looking for a

certain type of man," said a source familiar with the CIA hiring procedures.

"He had to have every clearable background. You can't imagine how many of these men turned up with eight or ten arrests on their records, and they had to be turned away.

"The man the CIA wanted didn't have exceptional intelligence, but did have a great sense of loyalty to his country and his family.

"He was an expert in what he did: handling a pipe or a crane or whatever. And he knew how to stay on his feet. These old boys don't talk any wayway," he said.

"You can bet a lot of them didn't come in wearing suits. These were tough old boys who could get drunk and fight like a bear.

"These guys, most of them, chewed tobacco and wore cowboy boots. And

they all signed documents pledging themselves to secrecy, and that's hanging over every goddamned one of us right today," he said.

The crew members hired for the mission were given 18-month contracts, which included bonuses of \$150 monthly.

But they knew the agency (CIA) treated everyone very well and they are still hoping they will get bonuses of \$5,000 or \$10,000.

Indeed, they were treated well. They were provided with spacious quarters on the ship, plenty of steaks and lobster tails, beer and whiskey, and a special kind of camaraderie on the part of the CIA agents who schooled the roughneck workers, drank with them, lived with them and earned their respect.

Some places around the Redwood City waterfront

were off limits to the crew because they might be dangerous, or because of prostitutes or simply because of poor security.

"These men considered it an honor to be selected when they found out what we were going to do," said a source who knew most of the 140-men crew.

The CIA agents handled the crew members as would any good agent who sends a spy into the cold — with respect and patience.

"Everyone we met from the CIA was an expert in something, and a good guy," said the source.

The CIA is keeping in constant contact with the crew members now that the ship is docked at Long Beach.

Just three weeks ago an agent dropped into a large southern city for a meeting with an employee of the *Glomar Explorer* venture.

## 140 Men With Grit

"They wanted to let us know they were around," the source said of his meeting with the young CIA agent.

"They want to let us know there are future projects coming up. Sometimes it seems they want to remind you that when you get hooked up with a project like this (with the CIA), sometimes you can't ever get untangled from it, or them."

The CIA used little advertising to attract men to the job. Rather, the intelligence agency men knew and realized that word would spread about the *Explorer* and its ostensible mission to draw off valuable mineral deposits from the ocean bottom.

They offered good money and adventure. And the mystery of being associated with Howard Hughes, the most mysterious man of all

"We were hired, many of us, out of the fifth floor of the Tishman Building at 5959 Century boulevard, in Los Angeles," said the source.

"There was a picture of the *Glomar Explorer* on the wall in the interview room and part of the pitch to the new employees was that Hughes had recently located a fantastic mineral deposit in the Pacific.

"It seems like everyone had heard about this ship, this strange and different ship that was going to do something, nobody was sure what."

The prospective employees first met a CIA contract man to do the initial interviews in the Tishman Building.

In a room adjacent to his was a CIA man known as Howard Imamura, about 49, who was the ostensible assistant but who actually decided on whether a man was

a good enough prospect to undergo the clearance procedures.

"Clearance took about three months for each man," said the source.

"The men looking for jobs were told they would be working for Howard Hughes and that Howard Hughes is a strange man and not to be alarmed if someone came into their neighborhoods and asked about them," he said.

"The CIA man next door to the first interviewer would ask them a lot, like did they ever use drugs. One young man who said he smoked a lot of marijuana cigarettes, was hired anyway because someone pulled some strings for him and he worked out fine.

"A young woman was hired, the daughter, I think, of a big name sports personality.

"Nobody was hired who

had ever belonged to a union because we didn't want union trouble.

"No Jews were hired because of some possible involvement with Israel. No one from the Scripps Institute because it had been involved in some of kind of government work. And no blacks.

"A lot of the men were told the information on their background, was needed for visa details," he added.

One employee, musing about this experiences, said: "sometimes I would look around and see average people and I would wonder, 'Why can't I be like that?'"

Riding late at night in his car, smoking cigaret after cigaret, on the streets of a large Southern city where he now lives temporarily, he wonders about it all. He is pretty sure life will never be the same.

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